

Abstract 616

TITLE: Project Cover Up: A Community Level Intervention to Increase Condom Use in Houston

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ISSUE: Persons at high-risk for STDs and HIV do not often have myths and misperceptions of condom use and efficacy. Thus, effective community level interventions are needed to alter community norms and values.

SETTING: Community organizations and business establishments in southeast Houston.

PROJECT: Responding to the HIV/AIDS and STD epidemic in several Houston neighborhoods, the Bureau of HIV/STD Prevention implemented a community level intervention to increase condom access and availability. The project (1) assessed community opinions on the effectiveness, cost and availability of condoms. (2) Developed a social marketing strategy to impact community norms on condom use. (3) Provided free condoms at several business establishments, including beauty shops, barbers shops, nail salons, pager shops and motels. (4) Educated community members to serve a peer outreach/educators. (5) Evaluated the programs overall effectiveness.

RESULTS: Community leaders have taken ownership in the program. The project has demonstrated the benefits of involving key community gatekeepers in the design and implementation of interventions.

LESSONS LEARNED: The Bureau's has experienced several successes with the program. Several community leaders have partnered with the program to strengthen prevention efforts. The Bureau is investigating expanding the program to other areas of Houston.

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